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OFFICE OF CHIEF OF COUNSEL FOR WAR CRIMES

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Date: 19 July 1948

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Fred Niebergall

FRED NIEBERGALL
Chief, Document Control Branch

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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Paul Joosten

Nuremberg, 15 July 1948

PAUL A. JOOSTEN
General Secretary
International Military
Tribunal

No. 53

M. V. DE LACROIX, French Minister in Prague,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Prague, March 10, 1939.

ACCORDING to information I have just received from Bratislava, the Central Government until now seems to remain in control of the situation in spite of intense agitation. The military authorities, under the orders of the general who is said to have been sent from Prague, have unlimited control. It is reported that some units of the Hlinka guard made a show of resistance, but that they were held in check. It was all confined to a few shots and some scuffling.

The Cabinet of Prague, according to M. Chvalkovsky's communication this morning to my British colleague, is said to be confident of complete success on the home front. As to the attitude of Germany, the Minister for Foreign Affairs had not yet noticed the least reaction from that side.

According to rumours which seem to be gaining strength, concentrations of German troops are taking place near the southern frontiers of Moravia and Slovakia. It should be observed that such rumours, for the time being are interpreted as a probable indication of Germany's desire, by intimidatory action, to exploit the situation created by her agents and to exercise pressure so as to extend her domination over Czechoslovakia.

LACROIX.

No. 54

M. DE MONTBAS, French Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 11, 1939.

THE conflict which has arisen between the Czechs and the Slovaks has suddenly taken an alarming turn, not only following the proclamation of martial law in Bratislava and the disbanding of the Slovak formations for self-protection (this measure, since yesterday, is being commented on in the German Press in a threatening tone), but also by the fact that Mgr. Tiso is reported to have addressed (as confirmed this morning by the D.N.B.) an appeal for help to the Government of the Reich. In such circumstances we must expect the latter to intervene very soon by ordering the Government of Prague to reconsider

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the measures just taken and to respect Slovak autonomy. According to information received at the Embassy, this intervention may, as soon as next week, take the form of an "armed mediation."

Although up to the present moment the attitude of the German Press is less aggressive than when the "liberation" of Sudetenland was to the fore, it foreshadows that Germany will not remain passive and that she is adopting the cause of the nationalists revolting against the Government of Prague.

MONTBAS.

No. 55

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 13, 1939.

WHILE at the Wilhelmstrasse, as late as in the evening of March 12, they professed to be confident that M. Chvalkovsky would find a satisfactory solution for the crisis within Czechoslovakia, the Minister for Propaganda, according to information obtained this morning by my Belgian colleague, now declares that from the moment Germans are molested, the Reich will have to intervene in a more direct manner, but in what manner they decline to say.

The situation as I found it on my return to Berlin is, therefore, an extremely serious one, and seems to be developing rapidly.

Analysed in its political and military factors, it appears in the following light:

On March 11 and 12 military preparations were noticed in certain German garrisons, and particularly in those near Berlin. These preparations, which consisted for instance in camouflaging the numbers on the cars and the men's regimental badges, are an indication of impending troop movements.

In the course of the same days, troop movements were definitely observed in the provinces, on one side through Saxony and Silesia in the direction of Gleiwitz, on the other in Franconia in the direction of Austria.

In spite of camouflage it was possible to identify light armoured units coming from Northern Germany, as well as certain anti-aircraft units. On the other hand, on March 12 no preparations could be noticed in Austria north of Vienna, or in Vienna itself. That region, however,

is well provided with mechanised units, the second Armoured Division especially, which is now in line.

Everything suggests that Germany will very soon resort to force against Czechoslovakia. Although no actual measures of mobilisation, even partial, have yet been noticed, movements of troop units belonging to the standing army are taking place with the object either of gripping the corridor or Moravia in a vice, or of surrounding the entire Bohemian Quadrilateral.

It appears from more recent information that, on the one hand Staff officers are to leave Berlin to-morrow morning, March 14, in order to take part in the operation, and also that the Black Militia would be entrusted with vanguard duties.

COULONDRE.

No. 56

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 13, 1939.

ACCORDING to the declarations obtained by one of our correspondents this evening from a German who occupies an important post in one of the Ministries, the fate of Bohemia and Moravia is now settled. What Germany wants is the annexation of these provinces pure and simple. "It is not for the sake of Mgr. Tiso," said the person in question, "that our divisions are marching and that we are mobilising several major aircraft units. You should understand that we intend to settle the question finally. To-day an ultimatum will be sent to the Prague Government. The answer we receive is immaterial. It will be overtaken by events by the time it reaches us."

This latter indication should, in my opinion, be transmitted to Prague as a matter of the utmost urgency. It would be desirable for the Czech Government to take the necessary steps so as not to be overtaken by events as happened in September.

COULONDRE.

No. 57

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 13, 1939.

ONE may well wonder what political designs are to be realised by

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the display of force which I have reported. Though the secret appears to have been well kept, it seems, nevertheless, that the attitude of the German Press is sufficient to enlighten us.

As early as March 10 a D.N.B. dispatch made it known that Mgr. Tiso had actually addressed a note to the German Government. From that moment the newspapers of the Reich have been maintaining that the only regular Slovak Government for Germany was that of Mgr. Tiso. Yesterday, a new element appeared: the violent attitude adopted by the Czechs towards the German minority who made common cause with the Slovak extremists. But to-day the quarrels between Czechs and Slovaks are relegated to the background in the Press, which is clamorously denouncing the régime of terror which the Czechs are supposed to have unleashed, as in M. Beneš's time against the Slovak separatists as well as those of Bohemia and Moravia. The evolution in the German attitude towards the neighbouring country, which had become noticeable in the last few months, is now taking definite shape. It certainly looks as if the policy of reducing Czechoslovakia to a vassal state was giving way to that of separating of its component nationalities. It also appears that the Reich, while favouring the independence of Slovakia, is supporting the Polish and Hungarian claims on Ruthenia, which, if it secedes from Czechoslovakia, must inevitably fall into the hands of its neighbours. The future will show what sort of bartering with Budapest and Warsaw such a policy will involve. For the time being, in order that this policy should succeed, there must be a pretext for intervention. As in September last, the German Press denounces the persecutions alleged to have been suffered by German nationals, or by members of the German minority in Czechoslovakia. As in September, the newspapers announce that concentrations of Czech troops are taking place near the German frontiers. The German population, from what I hear, feels, as it did last autumn, a certain uneasiness caused by military preparations and by current rumours. They fear some rash adventure. But this factor appears to be even less decisive than it was in September. The leaders of the Reich, judging by news that reaches me from German sources, are not reckoning with any resistance whatsoever from the Czechs. The intended action, in their opinion, will not overstep the bounds of a police operation, and it appears, by the manner in which this operation is being prepared on the military side, that such are actually the German Government's anticipations.

In short, the situation appears to be serious enough for us to have

manded a reshuffle of the Prague Cabinet. She is said to have made an imperative *démarche* yesterday evening to demand the dismissal of several Ministers, whom she considers not sufficiently docile, or suspect of sympathy with the tendencies of the former régime in their home policy.

According to certain information it even appears that a complete change in the ministry must be expected very soon. German pressure has made the small fascist groups against which measures were recently taken, increasingly bold. They maintain that General Gajda will be the next President of the Council.

LACROIX.

No. 62

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 14, 1939.

WITH regard to the visit which Mgr. Tiso, accompanied by M. Durcansky, made to Berlin yesterday, I have gathered the following information.

A telegram from Berlin inviting Mgr. Tiso to go to the Führer without delay was received at Bratislava at about ten o'clock yesterday morning. After conferring with the principal leaders of the Slovak People's Party, Mgr. Tiso decided to obey this summons. In the course of the interview which he had with Herr Hitler towards the end of the afternoon, the latter declared that he desired to see a completely free Slovakia, and that in other respects it rested with the Slovak people to choose their own destiny. Mgr. Tiso and M. Durcansky conferred from nine p.m. until three a.m. with Herr von Ribbentrop and various Nazi high officials and dignitaries, in particular with Herr Keppler, who appears to have played an important part in the whole affair.

They are said to have examined every aspect of the situation and any further developments which might result from it, and the conclusion arrived at through these discussions appears to be that the salvation for the Slovaks can only lie in complete separation from Prague.

It is announced that the Slovak Diet, whose sitting was to take place to-day but had been postponed until the 28th, will now sit this morning; it is anticipated that it will vote in favour of complete independence for the country. The Slovak Ministers are said to have

received from the Nazi leaders an assurance that Germany's friendship will be given to an independent Slovakia.

COULONDRE.

No. 63

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 14, 1939.

THE State Secretary, who this morning received my British colleague, gave him in substance the following information:

Germany holds the Tiso Government to be the only legal Government. She considers the action taken against it by the Prague Government contrary to the constitution.

The Reich desires the maintenance of order, proper treatment for the German minority and the final elimination of "the Beneš spirit."

It has not yet been decided in Berlin what action will be taken, and up to the present no ultimatum has been addressed to the Prague Government. It is considered that matters can be settled in a decent manner, especially if the Czech Government respects the decision of the Slovak Diet. Moreover, the line of policy to be observed in regard to Czechoslovakia is a matter of divergent opinions and has not yet been fixed.

The State Secretary has indicated to Sir Nevile Henderson that the Reich Government had no contact with the Czech Government, but that he personally did not consider that there was any objection to such contact, provided that it took place between Governments.

In giving his account of that conversation to the Foreign Office my colleague said in conclusion that there is still hesitation in Berlin over the line of conduct to be adopted. This is certainly the impression which Herr von Weizsäcker gives; but I am not certain that the declarations of the State Secretary are still in accordance with the actual facts.

I am inclined to believe that the National-Socialist Government has from now on decided on a break-up of the nationalities constituting Czechoslovakia, a break-up which would be only the first step in a complete partition of the country.

COULONDRE.

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No. 64

M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to M. Corbin, French Ambassador in London,
to M. Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin.

Paris, March 14, 1939.

For London: I am sending the following telegram to our Ambassador in Berlin.

For both: Until now the Munich Agreement has been presented, even in Germany, as a vital element in the peace of Central Europe, and, in a more general way, as a decisive step in the promotion of mutual confidence between the principal European Powers interested in the maintenance of that peace, among whom it should create both a formal basis for understanding and at the same time an atmosphere of co-operation which would prevent any future resort to force.

More particularly, as far as Czechoslovakia is concerned, Annex No. 1 to the Munich Agreement, referring to an international guarantee of the new frontiers of the Czechoslovak State, established between the four signatories, by means of definite stipulations, an incontestable solidarity of purpose.

It was, moreover, the wider implication, attributed to the Munich Agreement, which brought about the easing of Franco-German relations, marked by the declaration of December 6, with all that this implied in the political, economic and cultural spheres.

It is therefore with the most serious concern that the French Government is following the development of events in Slovakia. The attitude to be adopted on this occasion by the Reich Government cannot but provide a lesson which will throw a light upon many essential questions for the future relations of Germany with the rest of Europe.

Taking into account the foregoing considerations you should inquire most urgently from Herr von Ribbentrop what interpretation, in the opinion of the Reich authorities themselves, is to be put on their action in Slovakia. You should make this inquiry purely as a request for information, the importance of which would justify, if necessary, a reference on your part to the procedure of mutual consultation provided for by the declaration of December 6.

Inasmuch as the French Government intends to respond in all sincerity to the new orientation resulting from the Munich Agreement and the Franco-German Declaration, Berlin cannot be surprised at

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our present anxiety to obtain a clear means of judging the degree of confidence which the German Government means to establish as a justification of that policy.

Georges Bonnet.

No. 65

M. Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 14, 1939.

Immediately after the Vienna Award, while the German Press was celebrating the "final" nature of the German-Italian solution, a far-sighted observer of affairs in Central Europe stated in Berlin: "The old Czechoslovakia has lasted twenty years, the new Czechoslovak State will not last five." Events which are now taking place have proved him right inasmuch as the Czechoslovakia of November 2, 1938, did not even last five months.

This evening, leading newspapers of the National-Socialists are announcing as an accomplished fact the disruption of the neighbouring State. The Diet of Bratislava proclaimed this morning the independence of Slovakia, Hungarian troops have crossed the frontier of Sub-Carpathian Russia; and, in reprisal for incidents more or less provoked, at Iglau, Brünn and elsewhere, the threat of a "crushing" intervention of the Reichswehr hovers over Bohemia and Moravia. According to rumours as yet unconfirmed, German detachments have penetrated Czech territory at several points.

It is striking to note once again the rapidity and precision with which Hitler's political plans have been accomplished, for it is beyond any question of doubt that the present crisis is in accordance with a carefully preconceived plan of which Berlin holds the principal strings. This Embassy has recently collected various information which leaves no uncertainty on this point. On February 5 a National-Socialist of standing, whose duties call for direct contact with the Führer's immediate circle, told one of my collaborators to be prepared for developments in which a "dislocation" (Auflösung) of Czechoslovakia would be unavoidable. In this case, he added, Slovakia would become independent, Hungary would annex Sub-Carpathian Russia, and the Reich would, in one form or another, obtain control of Bohemia and of Moravia. It is this process of disruption, this dissection of Czechoslovakia, into three pieces, which is being brought about to-day.

In explanation of this astonishing gift of prophecy, one can admit that the controlling circles of the Third Reich possessed at that time most precise information of the attitude of the Slovak people. They could form a better judgment of the developments in the situation since they exercised a strong control over it. But there is a more simple explanation: German policy had first decided upon its aims in outline. After that all that remained was to find means of inventing pretexts.

Now the partition of Czechoslovakia into three pieces allowed Germany a revision, if not a complete change in her policy towards that country. After Munich, the National-Socialist leaders officially took upon themselves the task of maintaining, in its then reduced limits, the integrity of the new Czechoslovak State. They considered at that time that a vassal Czechoslovakia, obedient to the will of the Reich would afford the latter a starting-point for her expansion towards the South-East, an expansion which had only to follow the corridor of Sub-Carpathian Russia to reach the oil-wells of Rumania and the wheatfields of the Ukraine. Hence Germany's veto to the Hungarian-Polish project of a common frontier, hence her stubborn determination in Vienna on November 2 to safeguard the existence of an independent Carpathian Ukraine within the frame of the Czechoslovak State.

To-day, Berlin does not hesitate to retract. The Nazi leaders are renouncing the principle of Czechoslovakian integrity. They are removing their opposition to the plan of a Polish-Hungarian frontier on the Carpathians. It is interesting to speculate when, how, and for what reasons this change of mind has occurred.

During the whole of the month of November and a part of the month of December 1938 the inspired Press of the Reich never ceased to present the Belvedere arbitration as a fair compromise bringing a definite solution to the Hungarian-Czechoslovak difficulties. The Poles, having themselves obtained complete satisfaction over their national claims in the region of Teschen, the new Czechoslovakia was, according to the German Press, a solid State which would prove to the world the superiority of the political conceptions of the Axis to the superficial structure built up immediately after the Great War by the Peace Treaties. This assertion was accompanied at times by calls to order addressed sometimes to the Hungarians, sometimes to the Poles when they appeared insufficiently convinced of the immutability of the established state of things.

Towards the end of December, there was sudden silence over the advantages of the Vienna Award. In January, there was no longer

any mention of it, and in a speech delivered to the Reichstag the Führer only touched lightly on the Czechoslovak problem. It is, therefore, permissible to conclude that it was towards the end of the year 1938, that Chancellor Hitler decided for definite motives to fall back on the lines which Italian political circles had continued to recommend in respect of Sub-Carpathian Russia.

Indeed, on January 7, the Führer, when receiving Colonel Beck at Berchtesgaden, declared to him that in his opinion the Ukrainian question was not of "immediate interest." It seems that with Count Czaky, at the time of his official visit to Berlin (January 16 to 18), the ruling elements of the Reich were still more explicit, and that the Hungarian Minister was given to understand that the Reich would not oppose, should occasion arise, the seizure of Sub-Carpathian Russia by Budapest.

What reasons can have induced the Führer to modify his attitude in this respect? On this point, as things at present stand, one is naturally reduced to conjecture. Possibly, as the correspondence from this Embassy has already indicated, the Nazi leaders realized that they were mistaken about the importance, for the purpose of a future German advance towards the East, of a Sub-Carpathian Russia that had been dismantled and deprived of its urban centres, its main roads and its railways by the Belvedere arbitral award. Then again, in order to keep in hand such an uncertain trump card, could the Third Reich allow its difficulties in Central Europe to increase, incur the rancour of the Hungarians and the resentment of the Poles? It was rumoured that the coming together of Warsaw and Moscow and the vehement tone of a part of the Press and of the Hungarian Opposition had aroused Adolf Hitler's concern. In trying to avoid the material obstacle of the common frontier was he not going to rouse against him the joint hostility of Hungary and of Poland, just at a time when the Western Powers were striving to reinforce their armaments? By yielding to the Hungarian-Polish plans, the Reich would, on the contrary, be assured of the gratitude of the Magyars and of their eventual support against Rumania and, on the day when he decided to resume his drive towards the East he would have at his disposal the broad fairway of the Hungarian plains instead of the narrow and difficult path of the Carpathians. As far as Poland is concerned, Berlin has possibly flattered itself that Polish neutrality in case of a European conflict could be bought by freeing Poland from the danger of having

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pensable to the new State, will be granted. Slovakia, therefore, must be regarded as a vassal of the Reich.

Events in Slovakia have had an immediate repercussion in Sub-Carpathian Russia; Mgr. Volosin has also proclaimed the independence of his country, whose position now appears most intricate. Indeed, as the result of clashes with the Czech forces, Hungarian troops have already entered Ruthenian territory, while the Government of Budapest has addressed an ultimatum to Prague demanding the immediate withdrawal of Czech troops from Sub-Carpathian Russia. Mgr. Volosin, on his part, has asked by telegram for help and protection from the Reich and from Italy. It is unlikely that these two countries will accede to this request.

Now after the Slovak proclamation of independence which has cut the Federal Republic into three sections, Sub-Carpathian Russia, hitherto supported by subsidies from Prague, can no longer survive. Its existence appears very ephemeral. In all probability it will be absorbed by Hungary. This at least is the point of view expressed in those German newspapers which are mouthpieces of official circles. Thus would be established the common frontier, so ardently desired by Warsaw and Budapest, which since the verdict of Vienna has been the subject of such bitter controversy. Finally the future of what remains of the Czechoslovak Republic, that is of Bohemia and Moravia, is itself under discussion.

The Reich is again bringing great political pressure to bear on the Prague Government accompanied by the threats of military action.

Following upon the quarrels between Czechs and Slovaks one can notice since last Sunday a sudden revival, in its most virulent form, of the campaign which the German Press launched last September against Czechoslovakia. The Czechs are once more accused of using violence not only against the Slovaks but also against others, and especially against members of the German minority and citizens of the Reich. The newspapers are proclaiming that the lives of these Germans are in danger, that the situation is intolerable, and that it is necessary to smother as quickly as possible the focus of trouble which Prague has become in the heart of Europe. They have even gone to the length of asserting that the Czech Government is mobilising.

This morning officials of the Reich press-service, in discussing the subject with the representatives of foreign news agencies, declared that the situation was "unbearable," and let it be understood that grave developments must be expected.

In the meantime the German High Command has concentrated around Bohemia and Moravia (that is to say, in Silesia, in Saxony, in Bavaria and in Austria) considerable numbers of troops, consisting for the most part of mechanised units, which are now awaiting the order to cross the frontier. The general impression is that this order will be given some time to-morrow. It is even stated that Pilsen will be occupied by German troops. They are said already to have crossed the frontier in the region of Morawska-Ostrawa.

It seems that after a moment of confusion Prague has pulled itself together and a last effort is being made to avoid a rupture with the Reich. The President of the Republic and the President of the Council of Ministers are now on their way to Berlin.

Will they succeed in averting the military menace once more hanging over their country? It seems very doubtful. The German-Czech crisis has in a few days reached a stage as acute as in the darkest days of September. The use of force against Prague appears imminent. It would doubtless be accompanied by parallel measures in Slovakia, whither the Czechs have sent important reinforcements during the last few days.

What are the designs of the Reich leaders with regard to this State, which for some time they have been referring to as "Czechia"?

Before and during the September crisis the Nazi leaders made no secret of their clear determination to wipe Czechoslovakia off the map. During last January the Führer himself told one of my colleagues that if Czechoslovakia did not "run straight," he would release a lightning attack against it. Quite recently one of the Chancellor's intimates spoke of this very dissolution of Czechoslovakia which the Reich press is gloatingly proclaiming to-night.

If the fate of Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Russia now appears obvious it is more difficult to perceive the Führer's intentions towards "Czechia."

According to my information, the Nazi extremists are calling for nothing less than the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia by the Reich, which would in return grant these provinces some form of administrative and cultural autonomy. Others advise the setting up in Prague of an authoritarian Government whose head would be General Gajda, Dr. Beneš's relentless enemy. Such a Government in matters of both internal and foreign policy would have to conform absolutely to the views of Germany.

It is said that at present the Chancellor, having been disappointed

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September. It is in contempt of this principle that it annexes eight million Czechs to-day, left defenceless by the handing over of the Sudeten territory.

It is the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination that Germany now invokes in support of the independence (in any case purely illusory) of Slovakia, but this same right is refused to the Carpatho-Ukrainians abandoned to Hungary, and to the Czechs who have been forcibly incorporated in the Reich.

Germany has once again demonstrated her contempt for all written pledges and her preference for methods of brute force and the *fait accompli*. Without scruple she has torn up the Munich Agreement as well as the Vienna Award, proving yet again that her policy has only one guiding principle: to watch for a suitable opportunity and to seize any booty within reach. It is, more or less, the morality common to the gangster and to the denizens of the jungle.

German cynicism has, moreover, been accompanied by consummate skill. With a remarkable control of men and events, the Government of the Reich has been at pains to give an appearance of legality to the violence done to the Czechs.

The official German thesis is that Czechoslovakia fell to pieces of itself. Slovakia, it is declared, in breaking with Prague, split the Federal Republic into three pieces.

As for Bohemia and Moravia, it was freely and of its own volition that the Prague Government, unable to maintain order and to protect the lives of the German minority, placed the care of these provinces—so runs the argument in the Führer's hands.

Such arguments can deceive no one.

There can be no doubt that Slovak separatism was the work of German agents or of Slovaks controlled directly from Berlin. M. Mach, head of the propaganda department of the Bratislava Government and a most ardent extremist, was well-known for his entire devotion to the Reich. M. Durcansky, Minister of Transport, who made frequent visits to Germany, was also a mere tool in Nazi hands, particularly in those of M. Karmasin, the "Führer" of the 120,000 Germans in Slovakia. As for Mgr. Tiso, a man of little energy, although as a priest he was worried by the growth of Nazi ideology in his country, he was incapable of opposing the separatist tendencies encouraged by Germany. It was on account of this weakness that the Prague Government dismissed him on March 10. This rigorous measure against Mgr.

Tiso and the latter's appeal for assistance to the Reich Government supplied the German rulers with the excuse for which they had been waiting to interfere in the quarrel between the Czechs and the Slovaks.

On receipt of the note from the dismissed President, German official circles let it be known that in their view Mgr. Tiso's Government alone had a legal character, and that, by appointing a new Prime Minister, Prague had violated the Constitution. From this moment the Berlin newspapers began to denounce the terror unleashed in Bratislava by the Czechs against the Slovak autonomists and their German comrades.

From the 12th onwards the tone of the Berlin Press became more violent. Now it was not only a question of clashes in Slovakia, but also in Bohemia and Moravia. Within twenty-four hours the Berlin papers had relegated to the background the sufferings of the Slovaks and denounced with every sign of the keenest resentment the brutalities to which Germans in Czechoslovakia were subjected, whether they were members of the racial minority or citizens of the Reich. To judge from the German papers, which used not only the same language but exactly the same expressions as in September last, the lives of the 500,000 Germans in Czechoslovakia were in the most serious danger. The Czechs, in whom the old Hussite spirit and the hatred of Germanism was re-awakening, had once more organised man-hunts. The situation was becoming intolerable.

Actually, with the exception of Bratislava, where unrest had been fomented by the German Self-Protection Service and by the Hlinka Guards, who had been armed by Germany, public order had been disturbed neither in Slovakia nor in Bohemia and Moravia. At Brünn, for example, where, according to the German Press, German blood had been shed, the British Consul was able to see and report to his Minister in Prague that there was complete calm. The stories published by the Berlin newspapers under inflammatory titles were, furthermore, very thin in content, much like a few grains of dust whirled along by some infernal bellows.

On the evening of the 13th the German leaders, who had unremittingly counteracted the efforts of Prague to establish a new Slovakian Government, summoned Mgr. Tiso to Berlin. During the night of the 13th-14th, together with M. Durcansky, he had a long interview with the Führer, who expressed his determination to see the creation of "an entirely free Slovakia." The proclamation of Slovak independence should follow without delay. That same evening, the 60

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members of the Diet were summoned for the next day at Bratislava, and Slovak independence, decided in Berlin, was unanimously voted by them. From the afternoon of the 14th, the German Press was in a position to declare that Czechoslovakia had fallen to pieces, that she was in a state of complete decay, that the Communists had reappeared and, together with Czech chauvinists, were hunting and ill-treating the Germans, notably at Brünn and Iglau. German blood—so it was reported—was flowing in torrents. Germany—it was said—could no longer tolerate such a state of affairs.

Meanwhile, 14 divisions, composed almost entirely of mechanized units, had been concentrated on the frontiers of Bohemia and Moravia. On the afternoon of the 14th, German troops entered Czech territory and occupied Morawska-Ostrawa.

Before giving the troops the order to march to the invasion of Czech territory, it was necessary to find some semblance of a justification. M. Hacha, President of the Czechoslovak Republic and M. Chvalkovsky, Minister for Foreign Affairs, arrived at Berlin where they were received by the Führer in the presence of Herr von Ribbentrop and Field-Marshal Goering. Brutally, the Führer states that there is no question of negotiation. The Czech statesmen are asked to acquaint themselves with the decisions of Berlin and to bow to them. Any sign of resistance will be crushed. Any opposition to the German troops will be put down by means of aerial bombardment. The Reich has decided to annex Bohemia and Moravia. Prague will be occupied on the following day at 10 o'clock. President Hacha, a man of great age and in failing health, collapses and faints. Field-Marshal Goering's own doctors intervene and bring him round with injections. Then the old man signs the document presented to him, by which the Czech Government places the destiny of Bohemia and Moravia "with full confidence" in the hands of the Führer.

The next day, the 15th, at nine o'clock in the morning, the first mechanised troops reach Prague. During the afternoon, the Führer enters the Imperial Castle of Hradschin and immediately orders the swastika to be hoisted. Czechoslovakia is no more.

The following day, the 16th, the Führer decrees the incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia within the Reich and constitutes them a Protectorate with some sort of self-administration, under the control of a "Protector" representing Germany and residing at Prague.

The same day, Mgr. Tiso, head of the new so-called independent Slovak State, asks the Führer to take Slovakia under his protection.

The Chancellor accepts at once. In fact, Slovak independence is at an end. Mutilated by the Vienna Award, robbed of its most fertile lands and reduced to a mountainous region, the country cannot in any case hope for an independent existence.

On March 12 Sub-Carpathian Russia too had proclaimed its independence and solicited the protection of Germany. But the Nazi leaders remained deaf to its appeal, although that country, which for a while had played the role of "Ukrainian Piedmont," had relied entirely upon them.

Sub-Carpathian Ukraine was invaded by Hungarian troops. In despair, the Chust Government offered the country to Rumania. M. Revay, Prime Minister, in a telegram to the French Embassy in Berlin, sought to persuade the French Government to approach the Government in Budapest in the hope that the fate of the country might be decided by diplomatic means and not by force of arms.

Everything seems to point to the conclusion that the Reich has no interest in this State and is abandoning it to Hungary.

One more feature deserves notice. It is the speed with which the operation ending in the partition of Czechoslovakia was decided upon and prepared.

Since the beginning of February, this Embassy had certainly noted numerous indications of Germany's intentions concerning Czechoslovakia. These convergent symptoms left no doubt that the Nazis were only awaiting a favourable opportunity to finish the work begun at Munich and to deal the final blow to a State which, already mortally wounded, was struggling with inextricable internal difficulties.

But it seems that the decision was not taken until March 8 or 9, that is, after the departure of Field-Marshal Goering for Italy, whence he was urgently recalled. Only on March 11 and 12 came the first reports of troop movements. On the 14th, about 200,000 men were massed on the frontiers of Bohemia and Moravia. This concentration took place without any disturbance of the normal life of the country. Once more, bombers played a decisive role. They were the unanswerable argument to which the Czech Ministers bowed, anxious to spare their people the horrors and the destruction of aerial bombardment.

In another letter I point out the repercussions likely to occur in Europe as a result of the new changes brought about in the map of the Continent under the pressure of Nazi Germany.

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tion taken against Czechoslovakia by the German Government, confronted with a flagrant violation of both the letter and the spirit of the Agreement signed in Munich on September 29, 1938.

"The circumstances in which the treaty of March 15 was imposed on the leaders of the Czechoslovak Republic could not, in the view of the Government of the French Republic, legalise the position laid down in this treaty.

"The French Ambassador has the honour to inform His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Reich that the Government of the Republic cannot in the circumstances recognize the legality of the new situation brought about in Czechoslovakia by the action of the Reich."

GEORGES BONNET.

No. 77

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 17, 1939.

ON the subject of the circumstances in which M. Hacha and M. Chvalkovsky were constrained to sign the treaty by which the fate of Bohemia and Moravia passed into the Führer's hands, I think I should report the following account, which I heard from a reliable source.

During the afternoon of the 14th, the German Legation in Prague made it known to the Czernin Palace that, in view of the deterioration in the situation, it might be useful if the President and the Minister for Foreign Affairs would go to Berlin.

Immediately on arrival, M. Hacha and his Minister, who were received with military honours, were taken to the Chancellery where Herr Hitler, Field-Marshal Goering, Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr Keppler were waiting for them.

The document to be signed lay waiting on the table, in its final form, as well as a memorandum relating to the future Statute for the administration of Bohemia and Moravia.

The Führer stated very briefly that the time was not one for negotiation but that the Czech Ministers had been summoned to be informed of Germany's decisions, that these decisions were irrevocable, that Prague would be occupied on the following day at 9 o'clock, Bohemia and Moravia incorporated within the Reich and constituted a Protectorate, and whoever tried to resist would be "trodden underfoot"

(zertreten). With that, the Führer wrote his signature and went out. It was about 12:30 a.m.

A tragic scene then took place between the Czech Ministers and the three Germans.

For hours on end Dr. Hacha and M. Chvalkovsky protested against the outrage done to them, declared that they could not sign the document presented to them, pointed out that were they to do so they would be for ever cursed by their people. Dr. Hacha, with all the energy at his command, fought against the Statute of Protectorate which it was intended to impose on the Czechs, observing that no white people was reduced to such a condition.

The German ministers were pitiless. They literally hunted Dr. Hacha and M. Chvalkovsky round the table on which the documents were lying, thrusting them continually before them, pushing pens into their hands, incessantly repeating that if they continued in their refusal, half Prague would lie in ruins from aerial bombardment within two hours, and that this would be only the beginning. Hundreds of bombers were awaiting only the order to take off, and they would receive that order at six in the morning if the signatures were not forthcoming by them.

President Hacha was in such a state of exhaustion that he more than once needed medical attention from the doctors, who, by the way, had been there ready for service since the beginning of the interview. The Czech Ministers having stated they could not take such a decision without the consent of their Government, they received the answer that a direct telephonic line existed to the Cabinet of Ministers then in session at Prague and that they could get in touch immediately. It is a fact that such a line had been laid down in Czech territory by members of the German minority, without the knowledge of the authorities.

At 4:30 in the morning, Dr. Hacha, in a state of total collapse, and kept going only by means of injections, resigned himself with death in his soul to give his signature. As he left the Chancellery, M. Chvalkovsky declared: "Our people will curse us, and yet we have saved their existence. We have preserved them from a horrible massacre."

COULONDRE.

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No. 78

M. Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 18, 1939.

As the Minister for Foreign Affairs is not in Berlin, I saw the State Secretary this morning and carried out the instructions which had been given me.

Before acquainting himself with the contents of the French Government's note, Herr von Weizsäcker asked me to give him its tenor. When I had communicated the substance of it to him, the State Secretary declared that he refused to accept a protest from the French Government concerning Czechoslovakia. He requested me to ask Your Excellency to reconsider the question. I replied that the French Government had carefully weighed its decision and that it was utterly useless to ask them to change it. As Herr von Weizsäcker still refused to accept the Note, I recalled diplomatic usage and the right of my country to express its opinion of recent events. The State Secretary's attitude surprised me all the more because the object of discussion was a solemn act, signed by the heads of the French Government and the Government of the Reich. What had Germany made of the Munich Agreement? Herr von Weizsäcker, without making a direct answer, referred to verbal assurances alleged to have been given to Herr von Ribbentrop by Your Excellency in Paris after the signature of the declaration of December 6, according to which Czechoslovakia was in future not to be the subject of "an exchange of views." He added that if the German Government had supposed that it might be otherwise, they would not have signed the pact.

I replied to Herr von Weizsäcker that no trace could be found of any such assurance, either in the declaration of December 6 nor in the broadcast statements which had accompanied it, and that the French authors of this agreement could never have meant it to constitute a possible recognition of the suppression of Czechoslovakia, however liberally its spirit were to be interpreted.

The declaration, on the contrary, provided that the two Governments would consult each other on matters which concerned them both and which in their development might threaten to cause international difficulties.

Changing his ground, Herr von Weizsäcker then expressed astonishment that the French Government could protest against a state of

affairs resulting from a treaty between the heads of the German and the Czech State.

I pointed out to him that he was now going to the root of the matter and that I could answer that we had the strongest reasons for thinking that the Czech negotiators had not found themselves in a position to express their will freely. Herr von Weizsäcker finally said he would take the Note as if it had been sent to him by post, but that he feared the French Government might regret this step.

I replied that one could never regret having done one's duty, and with these words took leave of the State Secretary.

The frown on Herr von Weizsäcker's face and the first gesture he made on seeing the document which I gave him warned me at the outset that he knew the purpose of my visit and had been instructed to persuade me to withdraw the Note. It was obviously impossible for me to yield to that wish.

Coulondre.

No. 79

M. Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 18, 1939.

According to information that I have gathered from the best sources, the development of the Czechoslovak drama seems to have been as follows:

The Nazi leaders, displeased at the resistance offered by Czechoslovakia to her new position of tutelage last December, worked out a scheme which, as the Germans put it, would effectively prevent this State from ever again becoming a menace to the Reich. But M. Chvalkovsky did not succeed in persuading Prague to accept this plan, which must already have almost amounted to a Protectorate. It was decided in Berlin to break this too unmanageable tool. From the month of February onwards, this Embassy drew attention to certain characteristic signs in this respect.

It was in these circumstances that the leaders of Austria, Seyss-Inquart and Bürckel, were personally ordered about three weeks ago to fan the agitation in Slovakia in favour of its independence. The Vienna wireless station took part in this. The Czech Government, frightened by the speed with which the movement was growing, dismissed Mgr. Tiso, who was considered to be too conciliatory. Herr

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Hitler was waiting for this mistake. It is only then, that is to say about March 9, that he seems to have taken the decisions which led to the disappearance of Czechoslovakia. Mgr. Tiso was summoned to Berlin. The Führer informed him of the coming invasion of Bohemia and Moravia and charged him, under threat of seeing Slovakia suffer the same fate, with bringing about the immediate separation of that country from Prague.

In order to prevent Germany's seizure of Slovakia the Hungarians and Poles hastened to recognize the independence of that country on the day of its proclamation, March 14; Germany, the instigator of the whole thing, abstained from so doing but sent troops to occupy Bratislava. Under pressure, Mgr. Tiso telegraphed to the Führer asking for protection, which was immediately granted. The German troops continued their march into Slovakia, but, on representations from Poland, Berlin decided to withdraw them to the line of the Vaag.

COULONDRE.

No. 80

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, March 19, 1939.

ON the morrow of the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia by the Reich, and the passing of Slovakia into German tutelage, I should like, after the violent changes wrought in the map of Europe, to try to determine in which directions German dynamism may turn, to see if we may still hold that it is aimed only at the east, and to draw certain practical conclusions for our guidance.

A direct challenge to world opinion by the treachery, the cynicism, and the brutality it shows, the "coup" by which Germany has just wiped Czechoslovakia off the map cannot simply be dismissed as a break in the general political line taken by Germany since last autumn, nor even as a deviation from this line. On the very morrow of the Munich Agreement, it was clear that beyond the Rhine this Agreement was taken to imply a free hand for Germany in Central and Eastern Europe, and, as a corollary, relative renunciation of their interests in these regions by the Western Powers. Germany had understood, or pretended to have understood, that at Munich France and England had wished above all to prevent recourse to force, but that for the rest they were resigned to Germany's will prevailing in

countries in which neither Paris nor London could effectively intervene.

The Munich Agreement, completed by the Anglo-German and Franco-German declarations, meant in Germany's eyes the right for the Reich to organise Central and South-Eastern Europe as she wished, with the tacit approval or at least the complaisance of the great Western Powers. For months this version found daily expression in the great German newspapers, officially inspired, as the reports from the Embassy have often shown. I myself have more than once noted the same state of mind in Herr von Ribbentrop and Herr von Weizsäcker, both of whom have expressed a certain astonishment whenever I have drawn their attention to the fact that France, as a great European Power, intends to be consulted in all that pertains to Europe, and that on this point there must be no mistake or misunderstanding. And yet, this misunderstanding did in fact exist. The Nazi leaders did not fail to stress on every occasion that, as the Führer said in his speech of January 30, "Central Europe was a region where the Western Powers had no concern."

In this respect, the German seizure of Bohemia and Moravia, with the subsequent inclusion of Slovakia within the German orbit, is in line with the policy of eastern expansion of which Germany has not only made no secret since last autumn but which she has openly proclaimed.

During the last six months, the tendencies of German foreign policy may be summed up as follows: a purely defensive attitude in the West and the orientation towards the East of Nazi aims and ambitions. The German attempt to occupy the whole of Slovakia and even Sub-Carpathian Russia shows even more clearly than the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia in which direction lie German thoughts and the German thrust.

Though we have no reason whatever to be surprised at this new advance of German influence in the East, on the other hand we have every right to condemn the unspeakable methods used by the Reich to achieve it. It is these methods which, properly speaking, constitute the break in the policy of appeasement begun at Munich, and which found expression in the declarations of September 30 and December 6. France and Britain were entitled to expect that in the event of fresh Central European difficulties they would be consulted by the Reich; the German Government, moreover, could not be unaware that the French and British Cabinets were ready for such an exchange of views. France and Great Britain also had the right to assume that Germany

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and while Count von Welczeck did not shrink from assuring Your Excellency that this was the Reich's last claim—at this very moment the Press service of the Danzig Senate was itself circulating a booklet entitled *Danzig: What is at stake?* which contained this passage:

"We now return to the solution of the fundamental dispute between Poland and Germany, which has been put on one side since 1933. It is apposite to recall in this connection that, in so far as concerns Danzig, the Corridor and the other territories arbitrarily detached from the Reich, it is a question of German soil, for whose possession Poland can put forward no claim, either moral, historical, civilising or cultural."

It is, in fact, beyond any doubt no less than this that is in question at this moment in the eyes of the Germans as regards Poland. The language used by those Germans who live in Poland, or who come here on a visit, and even that which one may hear from the lips of certain close friends of Herr von Moltke, clearly confirm it; and while, of course, my German colleague personally shows himself much more prudent, nobody has ever heard him say that the annexation of Danzig was the last of the Nazi claims.

The Poles are very well aware of the way in which the question of their relations with the Germans now presents itself, and they know the extent of the Teutonic appetite in their respect. It is this that explains why almost all of them regard war with the Reich as inevitable.

Whether they share the latter view or not, the rulers of the country remain no less resolved—and the moderation which they display in their appreciation of the situation in Danzig definitely proves this—to do everything they can in order that a conflict, if it cannot be avoided, should at least be retarded as long as possible.

LÉON NOËL.

No. 160

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Warsaw, July 10, 1939.

IN the course of a short stay in Danzig, the First Secretary of this Embassy, from information given him by our Consul and also from conversations with the High Commissioner for the League of Nations, the Polish Commissioner-General and certain Danzig authorities, has

gathered some interesting impressions, which may be summarised as follows:

(1) The wave of unrest which has been apparent for some days in the Free City is appreciably on the ebb. But, in order to estimate the significance and the extent, which is entirely relative, of this regression, it is apposite to emphasize the fact that the effervescence which had been observed in the Free City was considerably exaggerated by interested propaganda and never presented the character of organised preparations for violent action.

(2) In so far as can be ascertained, this appeasement has in no way slowed down the militarisation of the Free City, which is being methodically carried out.

The strength of the police force has been raised to 3,000 men. The formation of the Free Corps is being continued. Its nucleus was created out of 300 S.S. men from East Prussia, who wear on the sleeves of their uniforms the words "Reichswehr Danzig." The barracks contain several thousands of young men who have come from the Reich, but are said to be of Danzig origin. Smuggling of arms (rifles, machine-guns, anti-aircraft batteries, light tanks, aircraft, etc.) continues. Entrance to the Schichau dockyard, where this material is disembarked, is strictly forbidden. All the tailors and even all the dressmakers of the Free City without exception have been requisitioned for making uniforms.

It would be incorrect to say that these measures of rearmament are ostentatious, but they are known to the authorities. On the other hand, their rate, or even their importance, should not be exaggerated. In any case, this rearmament does not present the feverish character of such measures as would be taken with a view to an early *coup de force*. It is a question rather of a progressive preparation for the militarisation of the Free City, with a view to guarding against possibilities which perhaps do not as yet present themselves in a very definite way even to the National-Socialists themselves.

The Danzig authorities declare that the Free City wants to be in such a state "as not to allow itself to be invaded without resistance" (like Prague!). They also say that Danzig must defend itself against possible aggression by the Poles. This argument, for that matter, is not pure propaganda. It corresponds to a real anxiety on the part of the population. Recently, while in Western Europe the possibility of an approaching *Putsch* in Danzig was kept in view, the Danzigers, for

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their part, seem to have sincerely feared some such step on the part of Poland.

(3) In considering the four elements—the Poles, the Danzig population, the Party and the Senate—which constitute the local elements of the problem, the following observations can be made:

(a) Between the Poles and the Danzig authorities difficulties are endless. The Polish Commissioner-General, M. Chodacki, admits that every day he sees twenty or thirty fresh troubles arise. But both sides, for the time being, avoid turning them into incidents. The attitude assumed by the Polish Customs inspectors is significant in this respect. They shut their offices at night and appear not to notice the smuggling.

In the course of his conversation with my colleague, M. Chodacki made a point of repeating that Poland remained ready to negotiate. He has, he said, "a plan for negotiation fully prepared" which M. Beck has approved. But for the time being it is impossible to think of making use of it. "We fall," he added, "between the rigid 'It is my will' of Herr Hitler, and the much more elastic Polish *'non possumus.'"* It is impossible to see for the moment in what way the distance which separates them can be reduced.

Meanwhile, the Poles continue to invest considerable sums in improvements in Danzig. They also point out that, during the first five months of the year, the traffic of the port (sailings of ships, tonnage) shows an increase of 33 per cent over 1938.

(b) As far as the Danzig population is concerned, while, before the present crisis, the proportion of those who wanted the maintenance of the existing status could be estimated at 60 per cent, it is said at present to have risen to at least 80 per cent. Opposition is said to be especially strong among the Catholics, many of whom are of Polish origin but have lost consciousness of the fact, and form 40 per cent of the population.

Everybody however is agreed in recognising that the feelings of the Danzig population are of no importance. It appears to be terrorized and is lavish with cries of "Heil Hitler!"

(c) It is the Party, and, within the Party, the Gestapo, to whom all power belongs. But the Party simply means Berlin, and in practice, Gauleiter Forster, who is depicted as a kind of "butcher's assistant, and a jovial fellow," who has belonged to the Party since his early youth and has, apparently, the right of audience with Herr Hitler, who likes him; but he is, of course, merely the Chancellor's instrument.

(d) Between the two is the Senate, which is flattered at figuring

as a Government and at bottom more or less shares the feelings of the population, but is, of course, obliged to speak and act as the Party decides.

But the Senate is only a façade.

In observing the state of things at present prevailing in Danzig, one cannot help making a comparison with the internal situation in Austria during the months which preceded the *Anschluss;* a population without enthusiasm, sometimes secretly hostile, but passive; a Government which certainly would like to maintain the *status quo,* but is without real power; finally, the Party, an active minority, in fact the only active element.

(4) The comparison which one is led to make between Danzig and Austria is justified not only by the internal situation in the Free City, but also by the methods which German policy seems for the moment disposed to employ there.

In order to attain her ends, Germany has hitherto had recourse to two systems: sometimes surprise, a sudden attack; sometimes slow preparation, patient waiting for favourable circumstances. The Reich tried the first method in Austria at the time of the assassination of Dollfuss; but it had to give way before Italy. It then sent Herr von Papen to Vienna and waited until the Western Powers' common front had dissolved. The success which attended the first method in Czechoslovakia undoubtedly for a time led the rulers in Berlin to desire to act in a similar way in Danzig. But resistance inside the City, and the resolute attitude of France and Great Britain, seem to have convinced them that, once again, they must have recourse to the second.

There are many indications that they are already anxious to allay our watchfulness. The *démarche* undertaken by Gauleiter Forster's principal colleague, Herr Zarske, Parliamentary Press Chief and editor of the *Vorposten,* as well as the proposals to the same effect put to High Commissioner Burckhardt by the Gauleiter of East Prussia, Herr Koch, although he is Herr Forster's sworn enemy, seem significant in this respect. Herr Zarske insistently repeats that "Danzig is really not worth a war." At the same time, Herr Zarske is anxious to a degree that is quite remarkable, to brush aside the memory of the Czechoslovak precedent. He has admitted that "this expedition was a mistake," and even added that "in Berlin they do not know how to get out of it and would be very glad to find a solution. . . ."

No doubt, the progressive movement in this direction, which everybody agrees is clearly taking place in Danzig, is as yet only in its

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initial stage. Obviously many considerations or fortuitous incidents may change its course, particularly if Herr Hitler, who for the moment seems to want to trade on his credit in order to make the Danzigers wait for the fulfilment of his promises, should be led to think that this might be regarded as a sign of retreat.

In any case, there is one fact about which foreign observers in Danzig are unanimous. It is that it is proper not to attach too much importance to the daily vicissitudes in the little provincial world of the Free City. They may indeed, these observers recognize, possess their value as pointers and serve as a barometer; but the final issue lies, and will continue to lie, between Berlin and Warsaw, and between Berlin, London and Paris.

LÉON NOËL.

No. 161

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, July 11, 1939.

A PERSON of high standing in National-Socialist circles has made the following declarations to one of my colleagues:

"Herr von Ribbentrop no longer enjoys the Führer's absolute confidence. The Führer has given expression to a certain number of grievances against his Minister. In particular, he reproaches Herr von Ribbentrop with having wilfully concealed from him several items of information proving the high war-potential of Great Britain. Moreover, he accuses his Minister of having committed him, in connection with Danzig, to a difficult undertaking which runs the risk of compromising Germany's prestige if a satisfactory solution is not soon found.

"It must be borne in mind that the raising of the Danzig question is Herr von Ribbentrop's personal doing. However, when he undertook the campaign for restoring this territory to the Reich, he did not realise that he would meet with firm resistance on the part of the Western Powers.

"It seems that the Poles might still make proposals which our Government would agree to consider. Of course, Warsaw would have to make substantial concessions to us, but it is not yet too late to contemplate an agreement satisfactory to the two parties.

"Moreover, the Poles would have everything to gain by deciding

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to negotiate. For a conflict, whatever its issue might be, would in any case be fatal to them.

"In fact either Poland would be defeated, and she would then fall entirely under our domination; or else (a highly improbable eventuality, for that matter), with the help of Russia, she would emerge victorious from the war. In this case, the Russians would never reconcile themselves to leaving the country, and that would be the end of Poland.

"Have you not been struck recently by the somewhat changed tone of our Press towards Poland? You no longer find accounts of Polish-German incidents. Nevertheless, according to our information, the people of Poland continue, on the most trivial grounds, to molest our nationals living in the country. Our Minister wants to hold out a hand to the Warsaw Government for one last time.

"The Government, and especially those in control at the Wilhelmstrasse, view the future with some anxiety. They realise that the feeling of hatred for Germany grows daily. Only yesterday, this hatred, this indignation, were peculiar to the rulers of certain States. To-day, it looks as if the masses had been won over to these feelings. This development is especially noticeable in the case of Great Britain."

The foregoing information must, of course, be accepted with reservations. It is, however, noteworthy, because of the standing of my informant, who certainly seems to be in the confidence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Moreover, it does as a whole tally closely enough with the impression which emerges from a study of the German newspapers, and also with information which I have gathered elsewhere.

The Press campaign against Poland, which in any case never attained the violence of the attacks directed last year against Czechoslovakia, has recently become more circumspect. Aggressive headlines and polemical articles are reserved for Great Britain. Incidents between Germany and Poland are related without comment and are not given prominence. Several papers have declared that Danzig is not a *casus belli*, and the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* even seems to invite negotiation, when it writes that a reasonable solution is entirely within the bounds of possibility. A similar note is to be heard in Government circles, where it is given to be understood that there would be no refusal to negotiate if Poland were to put forward proposals.

In fact, Berlin has been surprised by the firmness of Franco-Polish

No. 333

The French Government's Reply to the Appeal of the President of the United States of America regarding Aerial Bombardment

Paris, September 1, 1939.

THE French Government hastens to reply to the appeal which the President of the United States of America has addressed to all the Governments which are liable to be involved in the conflict, requesting them to refrain from having recourse, in any event and circumstances, to aerial bombardment of civilian populations.

The French Government highly appreciates the spirit which inspires the step taken by Mr. Franklin D. Roosevelt and affirms its intention to conduct hostilities, if war should be imposed upon it as a result of German aggression, in strict conformity with the laws of warfare, and to do everything within its power to spare civilian populations the sufferings which modern warfare can involve. It is in this spirit of humanity, which has ever dictated in all circumstances the conduct of the French Government, that orders have already been given to the Commanders-in-Chief of all the French forces.

These orders exclude in particular the bombardment of civil populations and restrict aerial bombardment to strictly military objectives.

It is, of course, understood that the French Government reserves the right to have recourse to any action it may consider appropriate if its adversary should not observe the restrictions which the French Government has itself imposed upon the operations of its own Air Force.

No. 334

M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to M. WALTER STUCKI, Swiss Minister in Paris.

Paris, September 1, 1939.

SIR,

I beg to acknowledge receipt of the Swiss Government's declaration of neutrality of which you have notified me to-day. I take due note of this communication.

The French Government, so far as it is concerned, will not fail scrupulously to respect the neutrality of the Swiss Confederation and

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the integrity of the territory of that Confederation, in accordance with the treaties of 1815 and their complementary obligations.

I am, Sir, etc.,

GEORGES BONNET.

No. 335

M. CORBIN, French Ambassador in London,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

London, September 1, 1939.

(Received by telephone at 5.30 p.m.)

MY recent telephonic communication with the Political Department:

Sir Alexander Cadogan has just apprised me of the instructions which the British Government propose to send to Sir Nevile Henderson, and which he will be requested to carry out at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

The text is as follows:

"On the instructions received from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, I have the honour to make the following communication:

"Early this morning, the German Chancellor issued a proclamation to the German Army which clearly indicated that he was about to attack Poland. Information which has reached His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government indicates that German troops have crossed the Polish frontier and that attacks on Polish towns are proceeding.

"In these circumstances it appears to the Governments of the United Kingdom and France that by their action the German Government have created conditions (viz., an aggressive act of force against Poland threatening the independence of Poland) which call for the implementation by the Governments of the United Kingdom and France of the undertaking to Poland to come to her assistance.

"I am accordingly to inform Your Excellency that, unless the German Government are prepared to give His Majesty's Government satisfactory assurances that the German Government have suspended all aggressive action against Poland and are prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland."

Sir Alexander Cadogan has informed me that, in the view of the

British Government, the above communication should be embodied in an identical and joint note delivered by our Ambassador on behalf of our two Governments.

CORBIN.

VII

Franco-British Démarche in Berlin and the Entry into War

(September 1—3)

No. 336

M. CORBIN, French Ambassador in London,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

London, September 1, 1939.

(Received by telephone at 5.35 p.m.)

THE British Government, in a statement issued to the Press last night, was at pains to emphasise the fact that the German proposals to Poland, broadcast one hour previously, came as a surprise and that these had never been officially communicated to them. The proposals had been hurriedly read over once only to Sir Nevile Henderson on the previous night.

It is a fact that when the British Ambassador asked Herr von Ribbentrop to let him have the text of what had just been read over to him, he met with a refusal.

The German Secretary of State put the paper in question back into his pocket. I should like to draw the Government's attention to this action, in view of the fact that the German Government has endeavoured to compromise the British Government by affirming that it had definitely exercised a mediatory function.

CORBIN.

No. 337

M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin.

Paris, September 1, 1939. 5.55 p.m.

THE following is in confirmation of my telephone call:

The British Government have instructed your colleague to present

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to the German Government an urgent communication of which Sir Nevile Henderson will himself inform you. You should associate yourself with this step.

You should confine yourself, if a reply is given, to stating that you will refer the matter to your Government.

GEORGES BONNET.

No. 338

M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw.

Paris, September 1, 1939. 6.25 p.m.

As I have already informed you by telephone, the Italian Government has offered to call an international conference in which France, Great Britain, Poland, Germany and Italy would take part.

Please let me know (at your very earliest convenience) whether this proposal would find acceptance with the Warsaw Government.

It should be understood that the object of such a conference would be, the settlement of all the questions involved in the construction of a lasting peace and would not apply merely to the current dispute.

GEORGES BONNET.

No. 339

M. LÉON NOËL, French Ambassador in Warsaw,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Warsaw, September 1, 1939. 6.50 p.m.

(Received on September 2 at 3.30 a.m.)

THE Reich's Chargé d'Affaires has just asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for his passports.

LÉON NOËL.

No. 340

M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to all Diplomatic Representatives.

Paris, September 1, 1939. 7 p.m.

I AM now to give you the following details relative to the events of the last thirty-six hours, which reveal the responsibility of the Reich in the acts of aggression which have been committed against Poland.

"I feel certain that I can make a statement to the House of a definite character to-morrow when the House meets again. I anticipate that there is only one answer. I hope that the issue will be brought to a close at the earliest possible moment so that we may know where we are."

CORBIN.

No. 363

M. FRANÇOIS-PONCET, French Ambassador in Rome,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Rome, September 2, 1939. 11.10 p.m.

(Received September 3, at 3.10 a.m.)

SIR PERCY LORAINE and I have returned to our respective Embassies, after waiting an hour in Count Ciano's room for the communications from London and Paris. It was agreed that, as soon as the telephone replies had reached him, Count Ciano would make them known to us.

At 7.20 p.m. Count Ciano informed me that Lord Halifax accepted the Italian suggestion, but on condition that the German troops should withdraw to the frontiers of the Reich. Count Ciano told me that he did not think he was in a position to put forward such a request to Germany. This was likewise Signor Mussolini's opinion.

The speech delivered in the Chamber of Deputies by M. Daladier intimated that the position of the French Government was the same as that of the British Government. Consequently, it seemed that the Italian suggestion would have to be abandoned.

Count Ciano informed me that he had therefore just telephoned to Signor Attolico that, in these circumstances, Signor Mussolini did not think he could follow up his suggestion.

The above news has been conveyed to your department by a telephone call received by M. Hoppenot.

FRANÇOIS-PONCET.

No. 364

M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin.

Paris, September 2, 1939. 12 midnight.

I WILL specify to you to-morrow morning the terms of a new *démarche* which I would ask you to make on September 3, at noon, at the Wilhelmstrasse.

GEORGES BONNET.

No. 365

M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin.

Paris, September 3, 1939. 10.20 a.m.

LAST night, following a communication made to us by the British Government, and following the meeting of the French Chamber of Deputies, the French Government at a Cabinet meeting took the following decisions, which I have been charged to transmit to you.

You should present yourself to-day, September 3, at noon, at the Wilhelmstrasse and ask for the German Government's reply to the communication which you handed in at 10 p. m. on September 1.

If the reply to the questions contained in that communication is in the negative, you should recall the responsibility of Germany which you evoked during your last interview, and you should notify to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Reich or to his representative that the French Government find themselves, by reason of the German reply, compelled to fulfil as from to-day, September 3, at 5 p. m., the engagements which France entered into towards Poland, and which are known to the German Government.

As from that moment you may ask for your passports.

GEORGES BONNET.

No. 366

M. COULONDRE, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. GEORGES BONNET, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, September 3, 1939.

(Received by telephone at 2 p.m.)

MY communication by telephone at 1 p.m. with Your Excellency.

At 12.40 p.m. to-day I made the communication prescribed by Your Excellency to Herr von Ribbentrop.

The First Secretary of this Embassy is at this moment asking for my passports.

COULONDRE.

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No. 367

M. Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin,
to M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Berlin, September 3, 1939.

(Received by telephone at 5.50 p.m.)

I have the honour to confirm as here below the communication which I made to Your Excellency by telephone at 1 p.m.

Herr von Ribbentrop returned at noon. I was received at this hour by the State Secretary, but the latter informed me that he was not in a position to tell me whether a satisfactory reply had been made to my letter of September 1, nor even whether such a reply could be given thereto. He insisted that I should see Herr von Ribbentrop himself. In these circumstances I asked to be received by the Minister for Foreign Affairs at the earliest possible moment.

I was received by Herr von Ribbentrop at 12.30 p.m.

I asked him whether he could give me a satisfactory reply to my letter which I had handed to him on September 1 at 10 p.m.

He replied to me as follows:

"After the delivery of your letter, the Italian Government notified the German Government of a proposed compromise, stating that the French Government was in agreement. Later, Signor Mussolini intimated to us that the contemplated compromise had failed owing to British intransigence. This morning the British Ambassador handed us an ultimatum, due to expire two hours later. We rejected it for the reason which is explained in the memorandum which I handed to the British Ambassador to-day and of which I give you a copy.

"If the French Government feels bound by its commitments to Poland to enter into the conflict, I can only regret it, for we have no feeling of hostility towards France. It is only if France attacks us that we shall fight her, and this would be on her part a war of aggression."

I then asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if I was to infer from his utterances that the reply of the Government of the Reich to my letter of September 1 was in the negative. "Yes," he replied.

"In these circumstances I must, on behalf of my Government, remind you for the last time of the heavy responsibility assumed by the Government of the Reich by entering, without a declaration of war, into hostilities against Poland and in not acting upon the suggestion made by the Governments of the French Republic and of His Britannic

Majesty to suspend all aggressive action against Poland and to declare itself ready to withdraw its forces promptly from Polish territory.

"I have the painful duty to notify you that as from to-day, September 3, at 5 p.m., the French Government will find itself obliged to fulfil the obligations that France has contracted towards Poland, and which are known to the German Government."

"Well," Herr von Ribbentrop remarked, "it will be France who is the aggressor."

I replied to him that history would judge of that.

Coulondre.

No. 368

M. Georges Bonnet, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
to all the Heads of Diplomatic Missions accredited to Paris.

Paris, September 3, 1939.

Your Excellency,

In conformity with Article 2 of Convention III of The Hague, dated October 18, 1907, I have the honour to send you herewith the notification relative to the State of War existing between France and Germany.

Georges Bonnet.

The aggression which the German Government, scorning the methods of peaceful settlement of differences to which it had bound itself to have recourse, and the appeals to free discussion or to mediation addressed to it by the most authoritative voices, committed against Poland on September 1, in violation of engagements most freely accepted both towards Poland herself as well as towards all the signatory States of the Pact of renunciation of war of August 27, 1928, has confronted the French Republic with its obligations to assist Poland, obligations resulting from public treaties and known to the Government of the Reich.

The supreme effort, attempted by the Government of the French Republic and by the British Government with a view to maintain peace by the cessation of aggression, was frustrated by the refusal of the German Government.

In consequence, as a result of the aggression aimed by Germany against Poland, a state of war exists between France and Germany as from September 3, 1939, at 5 p.m.

The present notification is made in conformity with Article 2 of

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EXHIBIT U.S.A. 114 (2943-PS)

Filed Dec. 5, 1945

EXHIBIT U.S.A.

114

(2943-PS)

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EXHIBIT U.S.A. 114 (2943-PS)

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